

March 2008

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VATICAN CITY (March 27, 2008) -- Sailors and Marines from USS Nassau (LHA4) tour the Vatican during the ship's port visit in Naples, Italy, March 24-28. U.S. Navy photos by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class (SW/AW) Rustum Rivera. (RELEASED)

March is Women's History Month; have there been any women in your life or in history who have inspired you? >>>see inside

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COMMODORE'S CORNER

Dear Families and Friends,

The NASSAU Strike Group team has done a phenomenal job during the first month of deployment. We continue to do great things for the SIXTH Fleet commander in support of his objectives to keep the Mediterranean safe from terrorists and others that violate the law of the sea.

We've had three fun and highly successful port calls to Rota, Spain; Valletta, Malta; and Naples, Italy. We haven't won a single soccer game yet; however, we've had fun trying hard and meeting new friends. There are plenty of pictures, and we look forward to showing you all when we get home.

Our big exercise that is scheduled for mid-April, PHOENIX EXPRESS, is coming upon us quickly. LT Ryan "Coach" Carter and his team are working with a total of 12 nations that will be sending Sailors and Marines to USS NASSAU to conduct training in different areas. Check out all the latest news and pictures at our newsstand website www.news.navy.mil/local/esg8.

The schedule remains firm, and we look forward to our return to all our loved ones in July. God bless and thanks for your support!

CAPT Bob Lineberry



The oldest bullring in Ronda, Spain. See story on page 4. U.S. Navy photo by Lt. Thomas O'Flanagan, Chaplain Corps.



Nassau Strike Group(NASSG) Times

This is an unofficial US Navy newsletter approved for release by the Commander, Nassau Strike Group. News and information within are intended solely for its crew and family members. Any questions regarding its content may be directed to NASSG Public Affairs Office at nassgpao@lha4.navy.mil.

Capt. Robert Lineberry
Commander, Nassau Strike Group

Cmdr. Bradley Borden
NASSG Chief Staff Officer

MMCM(SW) Herbert Broughton
NASSG Senior Enlisted Advisor

Lt.j.g. Anthony Falvo
NASSG Public Affairs Officer

NASSG Public Affairs Staff
MC1(SW/AW) Rustum Rivera
MC3 David Wyscaver
MC3 Coleman Thompson
MCSN Cory Rose
MCSN Ryan Steinhour
MCSN Mandy Hunsucker

MCC(SW/AW) Christopher Hoffpauir
USS Nassau Public Affairs Officer

USS Nassau Public Affairs Staff
MC1(SW) Charmin Covington
MC2(SW) Michael Cortez
MC2 Andrew King
MC2 Sean Stafford
MC2 Amanda Clayton
MC3 Steven Smith
MCSA Jonathan Pankau

USS Nassau Participates in Malta COMREL Projects

By Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class (SW/AW) Rustum Rivera

VALLETTA, Malta – As the Nassau Strike Group (NASSG) continues its deployment, 38 Sailors aboard the amphibious assault ship USS Nassau (LHA 4) participated in community relations (COMREL) projects while in port the Mediterranean nation of Malta Mar. 14-17.

Sailors participated in four projects, to include the work at Holy Family Home for the Aged, where Sailors painted the door to the main entrance, cleared a garden, and reorganized some storage rooms; the Residential Home for the Handicapped, where Sailors puttied and painted windows; the Little Sisters of the Poor Nursing Home, where Sailors painted a large banister; and the Missionaries of Charity where Sailors painted the walls surrounding a prayer garden.

Lt. Cmdr. Michael Gore, command's chaplain, coordinated the COMREL projects and explained that the "Maltese were pleased to see us, were very hospitable and the Sailors had a great time." At the Missionaries of Charity project, Gore worked with Ms. Ana DeManuele who volunteers to help in organizing COMREL projects in Malta whenever there is a visiting ship. This is the first time the Missionary of Charity was included in a COMREL project.

As the Sailors mustered for the project, Gore said, "This is the spirit of the Navy. One of the reasons why we are here, is that nothing feels better in this world than helping somebody else. It brings a great deal of satisfaction. You are in the service anyway; the service of our country and the service of others."

"And as you help others, remember that you will benefit more by serving them than they will benefit by being served. COMREL is a time well invested not spent. Thanks for participating and have a great time!"

One of the volunteers was Aviation Maintenance Administrationman 3rd Class Erica Ostrom. According to Ostrom, COMREL is a great way to work with different people on the ship, and you get to know new faces.

"Mostly, I'm helping others, and I had a good time doing it. Also, after learning that these women (nuns) are carrying on Mother Theresa's mission; it felt good to be able to help these women who are constantly helping others," added Ostrom.

Missionaries of Charity, or Missjonarji Tal – Karita in Maltese, is a religious order established in 1950 by Mother Theresa of Calcutta, consisting of over 4,500 nuns in 133 countries, including Malta. Members of the order must

adhere to the vows of chastity, poverty and obedience; and the fourth vow: to give wholehearted and free service to the poorest of the poor.

"We chose this location because this was the poorest area in Malta," explained Sister Julia, a three-year resident and Mother Superior of the convent. "The Missionary's been here for 19 years now. The Maltese are very generous with their donations and the youths are very helpful."

The convent is located in Cospicua, or Bormla as known to most people in Malta, which is a part of the three cities surrounding Malta's Grand Harbour located on the eastern side of the capital city, Valletta. There are three nuns from India, including Sister Julia, one from France and another nun from Madagascar serving in the convent.

"We visit hospitals, prisons, needy families, single parents, and we do summer camp for the kids," said Sister Julia. "Summer camps are very expensive, and a lot of families cannot afford it. By doing one ourselves, we help the kids to stay out of trouble. We keep them occupied; and at the same time, they are learning something."

After some instructions from Sister Julia, the Sailors started clearing the back porch of the convent for painting; moving potted plants and shelves out of the way. At the same time, another group cleaned the grotto area and the back entrance to the convent. The Sailors started scraping the old paints off the walls, and then painted it after the walls were cleaned.

"With eight walls to paint and only two buckets of paint to use, I thought we weren't going to have enough paint to cover all the walls," said Lt. Thomas O'Flanagan, also a chaplain aboard Nassau. "The Lord works in mysterious ways, and we have painted all the walls. It's a miracle."

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Jason Davis, U.S. Embassy's Charge d'Affaires, with Sister Julia of the Missionary of Charity convent, and Cmdr. Domenick Micillo, assistant Naval Attaché, visited the convent to thank the Sailors personally. U.S. Navy photos by Mass Communication Specialist (SW/AW) Rustum Rivera. (RELEASED)



Nassau Sailors and Marines Tour Ronda, Spain

By Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class(SW) Michael Cortez

USS NASSAU, At Sea – The amphibious assault ship USS Nassau (LHA 4) made a port visit to Rota, March 7-10, before transiting the Strait of Gibraltar and entering the Mediterranean Sea while deployed to the 5th and 6th Fleet areas of responsibility.

In addition to the facilities available on base, many Nassau Sailors and Marines signed up for Morale, Welfare and Recreation tours to take a closer look at the culture and history of Spain. One was a guided tour of Ronda, a picturesque town high in the mountains famous for its bullring and scenic vistas.

Ronda also has a tall bridge connecting the new and old town, overlooking a deep gorge between two tall mountain walls. The tour guide mentioned famous artists and writers whose work was inspired while visiting at this same spot.

Old Ronda has the architecture and stone-paved streets of a town full of history. Spanish nobles once owned homes in Ronda and would spend time throughout the year to enjoy the town's mild climate.

The main feature of the tour was the Plaza de toros de Ronda. Built in 1785, it's one of the oldest operational bullrings in Spain.

The Romero family, one of the most famous families of bullfighters, is from Ronda. One member of the family, Pedro Romero, killed more than 5600 bulls in the late 1700s to early 1800s.

The Romeros and others in Ronda pioneered the style of bullfighting we see today, where a matador faces a bull on foot, armed with a cape and a long dagger. Before they developed what is now the standard, bullfighters rode on horseback.

Following the tour of the bullring, participants hit the restaurants and shops in the more modern part of Ronda before heading back to Nassau and making the trip through the Strait of Gibraltar. 📷



The main feature of the tour was the Plaza de Toros de Ronda. Built in 1785, it's one of the oldest operational bullrings in Spain.



Ronda Bridge connecting the new and old town, overlooking a deep gorge between two tall mountain walls.

Inside St. John's Cathedral and Museum, an architectural wonder.

U.S. Navy photos by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class(SW) Michael Cortez. (RELEASED)



Nassau Sailors Visit Gibraltar Before Entering Mediterranean

By Mass Communication Specialist Seaman Apprentice Jonathan Pankau

USS NASSAU, At Sea (NNS) -- Sailors from the amphibious assault ship USS Nassau (LHA 4) took the opportunity to visit Gibraltar during a recent port visit to nearby Rota, Spain, March 7-10.

The ship is deployed as part of the Nassau Expeditionary Strike Group in support of Maritime Security Operations and Theater Security Cooperation efforts in the U.S. 5th and 6th Fleet areas of responsibility.

The Strait of Gibraltar, dominated by the Rock of Gibraltar, is a strategic naval entrance into the Mediterranean Sea. The strait, which connects the Atlantic Ocean to the Mediterranean Sea and separates Spain from Morocco, is eight miles wide at its narrowest point.

Gibraltar is a British overseas territory. Spain ceded sovereignty over Gibraltar in perpetuity in 1713 under the Treaty of Utrecht.

"As you can see from the fish and chips bars and telephone booths, Gibraltar is an English territory," said tour guide Eddie Hollands.

Gibraltar's natural caves and manmade tunnels have been used time and again as strategic bastions and choke points. St. Michael's Cave, one of the natural caverns that reside inside the Rock of Gibraltar, was even used to hide five hundred Spaniards from discovery after attempting to take Gibraltar back for Spain.

"Growing up in the U.S., you don't see the first-hand history of over 1,000 years of culture. The military aspect of Gibraltar is also interesting and how it's changed the face of war," said Nassau Executive Officer Cmdr. Neil Karnes.

St. Michael's cave is now one of the most popular tourist attractions in Gibraltar. It is said that the cave is bottomless and if one follows the caverns, it will eventually take you to Africa, although this has not been proven. The cave is occasionally used for concerts and orchestral shows due to its superb acoustics.

"St. Michael's Cave was really cool. The history of the caves is just phenomenal," said Karnes.

Just outside St. Michael's Cave, the Barbary apes wait for tourists. The only wild monkeys found in Europe, they are very people friendly and will even climb up on shoulders for a photo opportunity. It is said that if the monkeys ever leave, so will the British.

Karnes encouraged more Sailors to take advantage of Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR)-subsidized tours as the ship continues its deployment.

"I think the MWR tours like this are great. Having the opportunity to experience new things at a reasonable cost is a great advantage for Sailors," said Karnes. ■



The Rock of Gibraltar and the Barbary apes; It is said that if the apes ever leave, so will the British. Photo illustration by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class (SW/AW) Rustum Rivera from U.S. Navy photos by Mass Communication Specialist Seaman Apprentice Jonathan Pankau.(RELEASED)

USS Nashville Visits Rota

By Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Coleman Thompson

ROTA, Spain – Sailors aboard the amphibious transport dock ship USS Nashville (LPD 13) visited the port of Rota, on March 3-6, while transiting through the U.S. Navy's 6th Fleet area of responsibility (AOR).

The Sailors enjoyed three days of liberty in the city, and also took the time to help the local community and improve international relations.

On March 5, Nashville's Chaplain, Lt. Edward D. Bass, took a group of 10 Sailors to the Sol y Vida homeless shelter in El Puerto de Santa Maria and assisted the staff there in cleaning up the facility, as well as handing out clothing, food and other supplies.

"The purpose of our project was to give Sailors an outlet to serve those less fortunate than themselves, and at the same time, strengthen community relations with the local community," said Bass. "A simple act of goodwill, done freely, goes a long way toward building and strengthening the reputation of the Navy and its Sailors."

The shelter is the only one in the town that is completely run by volunteers, and the local workers greatly appreciated the Sailors' support and assistance, said Bass.

The Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) officer aboard Nashville also set up several tours of the local area to make sure the Sailors experienced everything the region had to offer.

"We set up the tours to allow Nashville Sailors to experience Spanish culture and history," said Ensign Laura A. Thornton, MWR officer. "We had about 150 people take three different tours, all of which had great reviews. People got to view the 3rd largest cathedral in the world, Christopher Columbus's tomb, St. Michael's Cave and the Rock of Gibraltar."

After leaving Rota, Nashville will continue to operate in the U.S. 6th Fleet AOR with the rest of the Nassau Expeditionary Strike Group to support Maritime Security Operations and Theater Security Cooperation efforts.



OFF DUTY SPAIN

Photo by MCSN Pankau



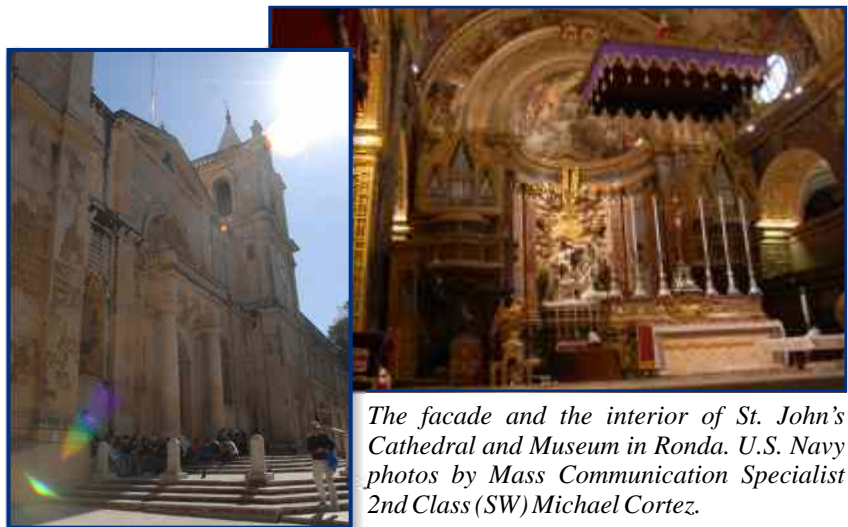
Photos by HM2 Torrence

IS1 Meaney posed with one of the Barbary apes guarding St. Michael's Cave on top of the Rock of Gibraltar.

Nassau Sailors enjoying a meal at a square inside the Grand Casemates Gates in Gibraltar.



Sevilla, Spain. Photos by Lt. Thomas O'Flanagan, Chaplain Corps.



The facade and the interior of St. John's Cathedral and Museum in Ronda. U.S. Navy photos by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class (SW) Michael Cortez.

CPR-6 Selects 2007 Sailors of the Year

By Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class (SW/AW) Rustum Rivera

USS NASSAU, At Sea – Commander, Amphibious Squadron Six (CPR-6) has selected Information Systems Technician 1st Class (SW/AW) Scott J. Murphy as the 2007 Sailor of the Year and Operations Specialist 2nd Class (SW/AW) Stacie N. Smith as the 2007 Junior Sailor of the Year, Mar. 1.

Capt. Robert G. Lineberry, commander, CPR-6 and commander, Nassau Strike Group (NASSG), delegated the awards presentation to the selection board headed by the command's Senior Enlisted Advisor, Master Chief Machinist's Mate (SW) Herbert Broughton.

"All candidates showed a wide range of accomplishments as well as sustained superior performance in their rates throughout the year," said Broughton.

Selection board member Senior Chief Information Systems Technician (SW/AW) Renee Brown presented the Sailor of the Year award to Murphy, the CPR-6 Communications Department leading petty officer and NASSG Frequency Manager. He controls frequency assignments, allocations of the strike group, de-conflicts all communication problems and monitors all communications for the NASSG. According to Murphy, being selected was a bit of a surprise.

"It's a tremendous honor to be selected as the Sailor of the Year, due to the fact

that I've only been in the command for a little over a year," Murphy said. "It's an accomplishment."

"The competition was very close, as both candidates are sharp and hard-working Sailors. IT1 Murphy's selection resulted from his superior performance, dedication and outstanding customer service throughout the year. His interview put him over the top for me. His work ethic and accomplishments have made a specific and praiseworthy contribution to the staff and the NASSG," said Brown.

Chief Yeoman (SW/AW) Marcus T. Browning, also a member of the selection board, presented the Junior Sailor of the year award to Smith, the assistant leading petty officer for the CPR-6 Operations Department. According to her supervisors, Smith's vital role in planning and execution of Phoenix Express 2007, Fleet Synthetic Training-Joint (FST-J) 08-2 and Composite Unit Training Exercise (COMPTUEX) 08-1 are main ingredients in what set her apart from the rest of the field.

Regarding the board's deciding factor, Smith says that she is "ready for the next level of achievement," and recognizes that chain of command will expect her to step up to the plate even more; a challenge she proudly accepts. Her advice to junior Sailors:

never give up.

"Trust that your chain of command will take care of you, get a mentor and become proactive," she explained. "Be smart about your daily decision making process and believe in your work... It's really easy especially for junior sailors to give up when they don't receive immediate gratification for their hard work and dedication. The hard part is not giving up and continuing to do good work. Just remember your work speaks for you, so allow it to speak volumes above the rest."

Browning added, "All candidates were deserving Sailors of the Year. OS2 Smith edged out the other candidates with her excellent interview and her additional community service work. She is a sharp Sailor who is willing to grow and assume new responsibilities. She is a key player on the (N3) team, and it's wonderful to see her hard work rewarded."

Each of the awardees was presented with a NASSG coin and a plaque by the selection board during the ceremony. According to Browning, the competition was stiff and the selections were not easy.

"By no means was there a unanimous decision for Junior Sailor and Sailor of the Year. The selection was a really close competition, and truly deserving for those selected," said Browning. 📷



Information Systems Technician 1st Class (SW/AW) Scott Murphy receives the award as the 2007 Sailor of the Year awarded by Senior Chief Information Systems Technician (SW/AW) Renee Brown. U.S. Navy photo by Lt.j.g. Anthony Falvo. (RELEASED)



Operations Specialist 2nd Class (SW/AW) Stacie N. Smith as the 2007 Junior Sailor of the Year receives the award as the 2007 Junior Sailor of the Year awarded by Senior Chief Fire Controlman (SW/AW) Everett Parker. U.S. Navy photo by Lt.j.g. Anthony Falvo. (RELEASED)



2007 Sailors of the Year with the members of the selection board. U.S. Navy photo by Lt.j.g. Anthony Falvo. (RELEASED)

For more news, go to
<http://www.cpr6.surfor.navy.mil>

March is Women's History Month

Have there been any women in your life or in history who have inspired you?

This year's theme:

*Women's
Art,
Women's
Vision*



"...My mom. She's a single mother who raised three kids on her own.

She managed to do great with us."

*Seaman
Kristan Marie McIntyre
USS Ashland (LSD 48)*



"...My grandmother, my mother, and my wife. They've helped me become a strong person all around by always showing me love and being very supportive in everything I do."

*Machinist's Mate
Fireman David Ducat
USS Ashland (LSD 48)*

"...Janis Joplin, because she was a great women's activist and did many things while she was alive. She lived her life to the fullest and I can appreciate that."

*Sonar Technician
Surface
3rd Class James
Palmer*



"...My mother. She is everything that a strong woman should be. She is extremely successful at the career that she has chosen and still her job doesn't come before her family. She is an amazing mother and a virtuous woman."

*Operations Specialist
2nd Class Rachel Leon
USS Ross (DDG 71)*



"I'd say my mother because she gave me all my morals; was always there to show me love, and gave me all that I needed."

*Sonar Technician
Surface 2nd Class
Joel Hulak
USS Bulkeley
(DDG 84)*

"...Queen Elizabeth I. She spoke seven languages, refused two marriage proposals from kings, and made a country of contrary men agree with her; all without starting a civil war. She did all of this wearing about 20 pounds of



Nassau Sailors Participate in Pen Pal Program

By Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class (SW/AW) Rustum Rivera

USS NASSAU, At Sea – As the Nassau Strike Group (NASSG) continues its deployment, Sailors aboard the amphibious assault ship USS Nassau (LHA 4) are actively engaging in a pen-pal program with 2nd grade students from the Cornerstone Christian Academy in Las Vegas.

Headed up by Cryptologic Technician Collection 2nd Class Rebecca Blumer, the project pairs Nassau Sailors with students of her mother, Angela Blumer, their teacher. The ship received its first package of letters and artworks from the students while the ship was import Naval Station Rota, Spain on March 10. The letters were addressed to everybody onboard Nassau; some to Blumer, to the Captain, and to the Sailors themselves. The artworks contained drawings of dolphins, tulip flowers, Easter bunnies, cloverleaves, boats, a submarine and ships depicting victory and smooth sailing.

“The kids are very excited to do this,” said Blumer. “My mom mentioned to her students about me being deployed for the first time aboard Nassau, and suggested that they should write and draw something for me and for the Sailors onboard.”

It simply started as a letter and a Christmas card for Blumer, then the students became interested in her travels and the ship. And so that the children would better understand, Mrs. Bergman accessed the NASSG Navy NewsStand local site and printed a photo of USS Nassau for her students.

"I showed them the picture of the ship. The children hear about events on the news, but it has no relevance to them. I believe that by interacting with the Sailors; this makes these events more real for them," said Mrs. Bergman.

There are also greetings for a happy St. Patrick's Day and a happy Easter; but mostly, the letters are about their appreciation to the Sailors for serving their country, prayers for safe sailing, and some are wishes for a happy homecoming.

Cameron, one of the students, wrote, "Dear Soldiers, Thank you for fighting for our country, and helping all of our

people. Great job! Thumbs up!"

Another student, Ryan, wrote, “Dear Sailors, Thank you for serving our country... It takes brave people to do what you do, and you are one of those people. You are brave, strong and a great person.”

Blumer shared the package to the crew from Nassau's Aft Main Machinery Room (MMR) where Machinist's Mate 1st Class (SW/AW) Patrick Thompson, Aft MMR leading petty officer, was preparing to light off the boilers.

"We absolutely loved the pictures (artworks); they made us all smile. Everyone down here (MMR) that read them; adored them," said Thompson. "Being stuck in the main space, we don't always get moments like that to make us smile."

As an appreciation, Thompson had Blumer light off one of the boilers, and had her photograph taken to share with the students. "We will definitely send letters back, and one my crew also has a shirt that he wants to send to one of the students," he said.

From the Engineering Department, to the Aviation Ordnance Shop, on the mess decks and all the way up to the Commodore, Capt. Robert Lineberry, Blumer shared the letters and has encouraged all to participate and share their experiences with the children.

"The crew enjoyed reading the letters and looking at the pictures. Even the Commodore; he wants the artworks posted on the bulkheads around the ship. Everybody said that they will send something back to the students," said Blumer.

USS Nassau is Blumer's first ship, and according to her, "It's not that bad. Just getting used to 'ship life' has been challenging, and these letters and artworks made it a lot easier for me."

Nassau is currently deployed as the flagship of the Nassau Expeditionary Strike Group in support Maritime Security Operations and Theater Security Cooperation efforts in the Navv's 6th Fleet area of responsibility.



Photos and collage by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class (SW/AW) Rustum Rivera. (RELEASED)

Malta COMREL Projects...

(continued from page 3)

The porch and the grotto area were cleaned and painted; every plant was put back in place. O'Flanagan called the nuns to show the Sailors work, and the Sisters of Missionary of Charity were very delighted.

"We are very grateful, and thank you for helping us. You will always be in our prayers," praised Sister Julia as she shook the Sailor's hands, and gave out cards and pictures of Mother Theresa as a token of appreciation to the volunteers. "Everybody is welcome here; this house is for everyone."

Jason Davis, U.S. embassy Charge d'Affaires, and Cmdr. Domenick Micillo, assistant Naval Attaché, visited the convent to thank the Sailors personally.

"We appreciate everybody's help. Thank you for spending your liberty time helping others; leaving the place better than the way you found it," said Micillo.

O'Flanagan said that he is always humbled by the joy and generosity of Sailors and Marines; and according to Culinary Specialist 1st Class (SW/AW) Aaron Huyo-a, he volunteered to represent the Navy, as a good ambassador, showing the host nation our sincerity and appreciation through the COMREL projects.

"There is a sense of satisfaction, and it's a reality check; knowing that you gave your time to help an organization that lends their helping hands to others in need no matter who they are," said Huyo-a. 📷

**"COMREL is a time
well invested,
not spent."**

Left: Culinary Specialist 1st Class (AW) Aaron Huyo-a and Culinary Specialist 2nd Class (SW) Ramil Quiroz begin to paint the walls of Missionary of Charity convent.

Right: Aviation Maintenance Administrationman 3rd Class Erica Ostrom clear the wall for painting. U.S. Navy photos by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class (SW/AW) Rustum Rivera. (RELEASED)

USS Bulkeley Visits Naples, Italy and Souda Bay, Crete

By Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class David Wycaver

USS BULKELEY, at Sea – The guided missile destroyer USS Bulkeley (DDG 84) has recently completed successful port visit to Naples, Italy Mar. 6 through Mar. 10 and Souda Bay, Crete Mar. 18 through Mar. 20.

Both port visits allowed the crew of USS Bulkeley to experience and enjoy all the amenities and sights each city had to offer.

"Naples, Italy was great for the crew with the proximity of Rome and Pompeii where everyone could get out and see some of the things they learned about in school," said Lt. Cmdr. Lex Walker, executive officer, USS Bulkeley. "Souda Bay, Crete, our second port visit, was another enjoyable experience for the crew. The local city of Chania offered nice food and shopping and then onbase with the softball fields and MWR pier it gave the crew an opportunity to a gel a little bit."

"We were fortunate to have the 'Argonaut' on our pier in Souda Bay, Crete which offered a full kitchen, free laundry, wireless internet service, and various billiard and ping pong games," said Ens. Megan Boyd, Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) officer onboard USS Bulkeley. "The convenience of this establishment was absolutely wonderful as our Sailors

were able to frequent the establishment on their own time and didn't need a liberty buddy to do so."

Boyd added, "MWR, along with the Supply Department onboard, provided buses that ran to and from the NEX and Chania which allowed Bulkeley Sailors to stock up on any necessary supplies as well as afforded them the opportunity to walk around beautiful Chania and experience a different culture."

During the long journey of a deployment, where Sailors face obstacles on a daily basis in order to preserve the freedoms we have come to know so well, port visits play an important role in mission accomplishment.

"There are several reasons to why port visits are important during deployment. One, it gives the crew an opportunity to enjoy some rest and relaxation. It's also a further commitment to our relationships with our friends and allies around the world," added Walker.

In order to ensure Sailors are well-equipped with information on port city policies, attractions and amenities offered MWR goes the extra mile to take care of its Sailors.

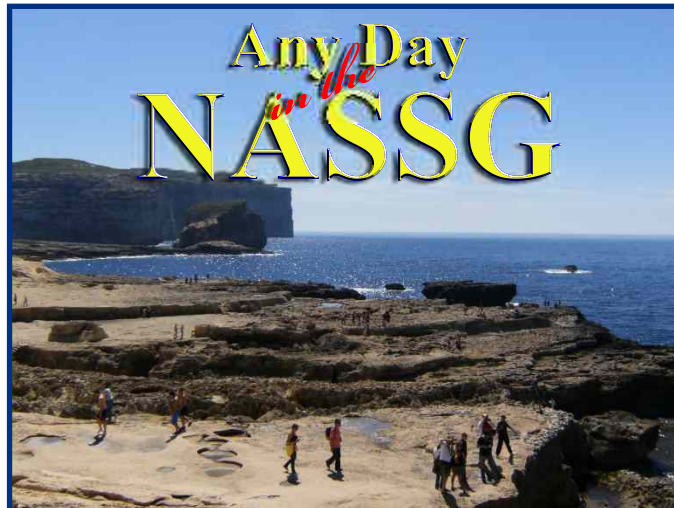
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▲ Sailors from USS Nassau (LHA 4) tour one of Malta's many chapels in the Mediterranean country's capital city of Valletta. Photo by Lt. j. g. Anthony Falvo. (March 16, 2008)

▼ Quartermaster 3rd Class Benjamin Rodriguez and Damage Control 3rd Class Kiel Durrant lead the ship's Visit, Board, Search and Seizure (VBSS) team around the decks of USS Philippine Sea (CG 58). Photo by MCSN Ryan Steinhour. (March 4, 2008)



▲ Sailors from USS Nassau (LHA 4) tour the island of Gozo in the Mediterranean country of Malta. Photo by MC1 Rustum Rivera. (March 15, 2008)



▲ Seaman Recruit Shawn Hornak stands as the forward lookout onboard USS Nassau (LHA 4) while the ship transits the Straits of Gibraltar. Photo by MC1 Rustum Rivera. (March 10, 2008)



▲ Flight deck personnel onboard USS Ross (DDG 71) secure the helicopter to the deck during flight quarters. Photo by MCSN Cory Rose. (March 24, 2008)

◀ Sailors from USS Nassau (LHA 4) participate in a COMREL project while inport in the Mediterranean country of Malta. Photo by MC2 Michael Cortez. (March 17, 2008)



▲ A member of USS San Jacinto's (CG 56) Visit, Board, Search and Seizure (VBSS) team climbs a ladder from his team's rigid-hull inflatable boat (RHIB) into the cargo doors of USS Nashville (LPD 13) in a training exercise. Photo by MC3 Coleman Thompson. (Mar. 18, 2008)



▲ Chief Hospital Corpsman (SW/FMF) Ashley Kelly, Senior Chief Hospital Corpsman (SW/FMF) Chris Ebert and Senior Chief Boatswain's Mate (SW/AW) Todd Mangin grill burgers and hot dogs during a steel beach picnic hosted by the Chief's Mess onboard USS Ashland (LSD 48). Photo by MCSN Mandy Hunsucker. (March 2, 2008)



▲ Sailors onboard USS Ashland (LSD 48) play basketball in the well deck during a steel beach picnic hosted by the ship's Chief's Mess. Photo by MCSN Mandy Hunsucker. (March 2, 2008)

◀ Gunner's Mate 3rd Class Bradley Nguyen shoots a line over to USNS John Lenthall (T-AO 189) during a Refueling at Sea (RAS) evolution onboard USS Bulkeley (DDG 84). Photo by MC3 David Wycaver. (March 16, 2008)

Ashland Visits "Holy Land" for Easter

By Mass Communication Specialist Seaman Mandy Hunsucker

HAIFA, Israel – Amphibious dock landing ship, USS Ashland (LSD 48) Sailors spent their Easter weekend, March 21-23, exploring the Holy sites of Israel while in port Haifa.

Ashland's Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) committee organized tours for the cities of Nazareth and Jerusalem, the Sea of Galilee, the Dead Sea and Mount Carmel.

"The MWR committee's purpose is to get the ideas, concerns and interests of the crew into a form that everyone can enjoy," said Chief Quartermaster Martin Herrera, Ashland's MWR committee chief. "The U.S. Embassy gives a list of authorized tours to the local MWR representative, Mr. Michael Fuchs. We contacted him and he arranged the tours."

Sailors boarded buses at sunrise and set off for special Easter tours. For some it was opportunity to visit history, and also an opportunity to renew their respective religious beliefs. For others, family ties tugged them to visit the area.

"I went on the Nazareth and Dead Sea tours," said Operations Specialist Seaman Joshua Danford. "I saw Mount Masada, where 900 or so Jews took their lives so they wouldn't become slaves to the Romans during King

Herod's reign. I also rededicated myself to my Christian faith by baptism in the Jordan River. I'll never forget that."

"My mother passed away recently and a lot of my family members donated money to have trees planted in Jerusalem in her name," said Information Systems Technician 2nd Class (SW) Ira Trussell, Ashland's Jewish lay leader. "It was neat to see the site where the trees will be planted and see all the holy sites."

"Unfortunately, I visited Jerusalem on the Jewish Sabbath, so a lot of the Jewish sites were closed. But it was interesting to see where, according to the Bible, Jesus was crucified," continued Trussell.

Easter is a Christian holiday that celebrates Jesus Christ's resurrection from the dead. Around the same time of year, the Jewish community celebrates Passover – a seven-day festival commemorating the Exodus from Egypt and the liberation of the Israelites from slavery.

Ashland is part of the Nassau Strike Group, currently operating in the Navy's 6th Fleet area of operation to support maritime security operations (MSO) and theater security cooperation (TSC) efforts. 📷

Bulkeley Visits...

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Walker explained, "MWR is absolutely vital to the morale and welfare of the crew. In Naples, they were able to tell us where to shop, how to shop and various things to look out for. I think MWR works fantastically from one extreme to the next. The highest extreme being lots of tours set up and things like that to the basics of offering a place for Sailors to do their laundry."

While in Souda Bay, USS Bulkeley Sailors of all ranks and rates got the opportunity to take part in some friendly competition during the "Blueshirts vs. Khaki" softball game followed by a barbeque on the pier.

"The game was a rousing success. Camaraderie was had both on the victorious side of the Khaki's and the defeated side of the Blue shirts. Although the skill level varied greatly from shipmate to shipmate, I think a good time was had by all," said Lt. j. g. Christopher DiGiovanna, surface warfare officer, damage control assistant onboard USS Bulkeley.

"I love softball and I love to mingle with the crew. This game gave us a chance to have some fun competition without looking at the ranks on the sleeves or the collar devices, said Chief Intelligence Specialist (SW/AW) Eric Emory, independent duty intelligence specialist, command training officer onboard Bulkeley. "We were able to let our hair down and enjoy the fun, the sun and a burger together as teammates and shipmates."

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JERUSALEM, Israel (March 22, 2008) – (Far left) The entrance to The Church of the Holy Sepulcher, where Jesus was stripped of his clothing before being nailed to the cross. (Left) USS Ashland (LSD 48) Sailors walk through the market while seeing Holy sites during tours provided by the ship's Morale, Welfare and Recreation committee, March 21-23. U.S. Navy photos by Mass Communication Specialist Seaman Mandy Hunsucker. (RELEASED)